

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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USDOC FOR BEWT/TDAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ENRG, UR
SUBJECT: RENEWED RUMORS ABOUT ESTABLISHMENT OF
SOVIET OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS AGENCY

REF: MOSCOW 1809, (B) MOSCOW 1326

1. BRITISH COMMERCIAL FIRST SECRETARY (REEVE) HAS BEEN TOLD BY MINISTRY OF GAS INDUSTRY THAT A NEW AGENCY WILL SOON BE ESTABLISHED FOR COORDINATION AND SUPERVISION OF SOVIET OFF-SHORE OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. REEVE SAID THAT HE HAD CONFIRMED THIS REPORT WITH SOURCES IN MINISTRY OF OIL AND MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE AS WELL. NEW ORGANIZATION WILL NOT, ACCORDING TO REEVE'S INFORMATION, BE A SEPARATE MINISTRY BUT RATHER A MAIN ADMINISTRATION (GLAVK) IN SOVIET MINISTRY OF GAS ANSWERING DIRECTLY TO MINISTER S.A. ORUDZHEV.

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2. ACCORDING TO REEVE, ORUDZHEV EMERGED AS LIKELY OVERSEER OF NEW OFF-SHORE OIL AND GAS AGENCY BECAUSE HE HAS REPUTATION AS TOUGH "GO-GETTER" WITH ENOUGH MANAGERIAL CLOUT TO LAUNCH THIS NEW UNDERTAKING. MOREOVER, REEVE SAID HE WAS TOLD AT MFT THAT SINCE SOVIETS HAD LITTLE OFF-SHORE EXPERIENCE NO ONE

ELSE WANTED TO BE FIRST TO DIRECT NEW ENTER-
PRISE WITH ITS ATTENDANT RISK OF FAILURE. OIL
INDUSTRY EXPERTS WILL BE DRAWN FROM OIL MINISTRY
RANKS TO AUGMENT STAFF UNDER ORUDZHEV, ACCORDING
TO REEVE'S SOURCES. AS TO TIMING, THEY COULD NOT
SAY OTHER THAN THAT IT WOULD BE "SOON."

3. COMMENT: IN VIEW OF FACT THAT SOVIET ON-SHORE GAS
RESERVES ARE VERY SUBSTANTIAL, WHEREAS OIL PICTURE IS
MUCH MORE IN DOUBT, IT IS SURPRISING THAT AN OFF-SHORE
AGENCY FOR EXPLOITATION OF PETROLEUM DEPOSITS WOULD BE
PLACED WITHIN GAS MINISTRY. THE RELATIVELY LITTLE OFF-
SHORE EXPLOITATION NOW TAKING PLACE CONCERNS PRIMARILY
OIL, NOT GAS. MOREOVER, WHILE GAS MINISTRY HAS ACHIEVED
A GOOD RECORD FOR RAPID INCREASE IN OUTPUT, IT WAS OF
COURSE STARTING FROM A LOW BASE, WHEREAS OIL WAS NOT.
MATLOCK

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